THE WAYS OF THE WORLD

COTSFORD DIC

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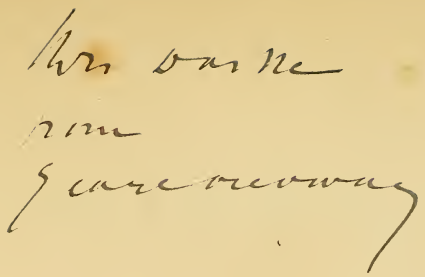

THE WAYS OF THE WORLD

THE

WAYS OF THE WORLD

VERS DE SOCIÉTE

BY

COTSFORD DICK

LONDON
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1896

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NOTE

With the exception of "The Magnificat of Magdalen," which appeared in the *National Observer*, and "St. Cecilia, M.D.," which appeared in the *Globe*, these Verses are reprinted from the *World*.

C. D.

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UNLIMITED LEAP YEAR

Hail to the year, when to woman's accorded
Her mask of mock-modesty licence to drop,
When to her tongue the occasion's afforded
Of being all puissant the question to pop!
Man as the suitor, by rights, should appear;
But that is all altered, we know, in Leap Year.

Spinsters, bestir ye! O mighty unmated!
Now 'tis your privilege boldly to woo;
Long for the hour and the man though you've waited,
All the past punting redeem with a *coup!*
Pluck up your courage, and be of good cheer,
Stake while you can on the luck of Leap Year!

Relicts, arouse ye! A truce to your trappings!
Off with your weepers, away with your woes;
Love to your door comes with tentative tappings,
Choose Number Two, and be prompt to propose.
Don a new bonnet, untrimm'd with a tear,
And the men may look out for a lively Leap Year.

Bachelors! pull yourselves bravely together,
Don't be beguiled into going too far;
Don't in Love's tournament show the white feather,
Or "landed" you'll be ere you know where you are.
(Though if your solicitor thinks your case clear,
You may damages net in the course of Leap Year.)

Rumour is full of a Sex Revolution;
Maybe to the altar New Women won't go.
Says Jeannette-who-wouldn't, with curt elocution,
To Jeannot-who-wanted-to: "*Toi, t'es de trop!*"
And more of the same sort of thing we may hear
Ere we come to the end of this naughty Leap Year.

AN ALPHABET FOR ADULTS

A's the Appearance we try to keep up,
Though scoured the platter and empty the cup.

B's for Behaviour, though little be left;
The world seems of morals and manners bereft.

C is the Card-table: circling the green,
There women and men at their worst may be seen.

D's the convenient Decree *nisi prius*;
Let the Church bind us up, yet the Law will untie us.

E is the *Éloge* that's made (as a friend)
By him who would borrow on him who won't lend.

F is the Folly of wasting our cash
Upon people for whom we do not care a dash.

G is the Gossip of all the most vile,
That scathes with a shrug, and that stabs with a smile.

H is the Halo that circles the feast
To the *débutante* fresh from the schoolroom released.

I is the Iron that enters the soul,
When the revel is routed, and broken the bowl.

J is the Juvenile maiden of forty,
Who hopes it's not wrong, but she longs to be naughty.

K is the Kitchen where, duly, each day
Reputations are burnt at an *auto-da-fé*.

L's the Libretto of life; many set it
To the music of love—and they sometimes regret it.

M stands for Midas, who signs but his cheque,
And highness and lowness all dance at his beck.

N's the Narcotic that worry can smother;
We all of us take it in some form or other.

O's the Offence (and of this there's no doubt)
That is never forgiven—It's being found out.

P's the *Pique-assiette*—he who drops in
When dinner or lunch are about to begin.

Q is the Query so often expressed,
"Pray, where does he come from—the man we know best?"

R is the Radical member, who pelf
And position would pilfer from all but himself.

S is for Selfishness, he who doth nourish
This excellent gift will assuredly flourish.

T stands for *Tartuffe*, who hoodwinks society,
Till one day the police want him, *malgré* his piety.

U is the Unrest that ruins the nerves,
Life's now like a week that no Sabbath observes.

V is the Virtue that fastens the latch,
When from fruit that's forbidden a bite it would snatch.

W stands for the Wife that is wise,
And shuts to her lord's peccadilloes her eyes.

X is Xantippe (there's some few of that ilk)
Who waits up till her husband comes in—with the milk.

Y is the Youth who, so drolly, affects
The ways and the wiles of the opposite sex.

Z is for Zero, to which all things tend,
Gay the beginning, the grave is the end.

BALLADE OF BEHAVIOUR

(À DOUBLE REFRAIN)

"*Manners aim to facilitate life.*"—EMERSON.

DEMEANOUR dignified, gesture slow,
Converse clothed in a courteous gear,
Place aux dames from high and low—
Where are the manners of yester-year?
Qualities cheapened once prized so dear,
Nothing veiled from the world's great gaze,
Reverence warped by critical sneer—
These be *fin de siècle* ways.

Curtsey from beauty, bow from beau,
Love was a gallant the most austere,
Compliments perfectly *comme-il-faut*—
Where are the manners of yester-year?
Impudence sheathed in scant veneer,
Chaff of tavern and circus phrase,
Double entendre for the maiden's ear—
These be *fin de siècle* ways.

Birth and breeding were wont to show
The bravest and best in this savage sphere;
Round lordly brows did the laurels blow—
Where are the manners of yester-year?
Swagger and swindle now domineer,
The pinchbeck calf is the people's praise,
The charlatan's cockade the mob revere—
These be *fin de siècle* ways.

Ploughman touches the plane of peer—
Where are the manners of yester-year?
That I'm old-fashioned, my cap I raise,
If these be *fin de siècle* ways!

THE ART OF SMARTNESS

(ADVICE TO A YOUNG WIFE ON THE MANAGEMENT OF HER SOCIAL REPUTE)

They tell me, dear Flo, for the season
You've taken a house in Mayfair;
And there's really no possible reason
(Though your spouse *is* a parvenu's heir)
That, with your own remarkable beauty,
And a husband so ready to "part,"
You should not regard it a duty
To make yourself thoroughly "smart."

First, see you've a cellar completely
Sans peur, and a cook *sans reproche;*
Then let your frocks fit you quite neatly,
Not a wrinkle from *plastron* to *poche.*
So you'll lure the best men to your table
To sample your sole *à la crème;*
And the women—to see if they're able
To find out your dressmaker's name.

When you send out your cards, "small and early,"
Old acquaintance should all be forgot;
You don't wish a cousin that's burly
To be on your ball the one blot.
Nay, even the villa parental
By degrees you will have to taboo;
They'd really prove too detrimental—
Your relatives there (*entre nous*).

Then a *cavaliere servente*,
To guide you about, you must find;
Of scions *pur sang* there are plenty,
Unbiassed by money or mind.
At every board of pretension
To "*ton*" he'll secure you a seat,
And persuade the reporters to mention
Your presence among the *élite*.

You must learn all the chaff and the chatter
That passes for wisdom and wit,
And of the last scandal (no matter
How *scabreux*) all knowledge admit.

You must always be late at a function,
You must always a dinner delay,
And talk, without any compunction,
Through the whole of a concert or play.

With the people you know, when you greet them
Shake hands, *à la mode*, in the air;
And the people you don't, when you meet them
Repel with a malapert stare.
You must snub undue familiarity
From all who move not in your sphere;
And if ever you sing for a charity,
Let it be a duet with a peer.

French songs, that are *tant soit peu* naughty,
Be ready to warble by heart;
And look rather happy than haughty
If you're told you resemble a—grisette.
Enfin, if you're pleasant when playing
At cards, and but follow these hints,
One day—well, there's really no saying—
Perhaps you may punt with a Prince!

THE DÉBUTANTE'S DREAM

The dance was over, with flagging feet
The débutante sank into slumber sweet,

Lulled by thoughts of the brilliant crowd
That to-night its welcome had smiled and bowed.

The women so fair—how their diamonds gleamed;
From their eyes what amiability beamed!

The men so noble—sure, knights of old
Could never more glorious sentiments hold.

O, the world's a bright, benevolent place
For a dowered maid with a beautiful face,

Haloed round with rays of romance,
Flashed from Illusion's countenance;

And even its pages of daily prose
Are daintily tinted *couleur de rose.*

So she dreamt of a Paradise (fool so fair!)
Whose glories she now is allowed to share,

Where the boughs are heavy, her head above,
With the blossoms of pure unselfish love,

Where the lawns are laid with the sward of Truth,
And the fountains dance with eternal youth,

And all the virtues are flowering there,
Loading with perfume the summer air,

While, hand in hand, through this blest demesne
Stroll the smartest people she ever had seen.

Here innocence whispers, "I love but you,"
There honour swears, "You may trust me true";

And "Happy," she cried, "am I now to be
Enrolled in such goodly company.

O wonderful world, with your fairy folk,
Be mine for ever!"—and so, awoke.

. . . . . .

Long years afterwards, grim and grey,
She walks alone on her wintry way,

And all that is left of her dream, to-day,
Are the eyes that weep, and the lips that pray.

ATTAR OF ATAVISM

(BEFORE A GROUP OF FAMILY MINIATURES)

Progenitors of mine,
As I stand before your shrine,
Of thanks I will not hum you any hymns,
For it cannot be denied,
Without prejudice of pride,
I'm the essence of your weaknesses and whims.

O grandsire, when you
Your system did bedew
With Madeira, did you never give a thought
To what stress of lemon-squashes,
And saline and soda washes,
I, through gouty diagnosis, should be brought?

Great grandmamma, your taste
In porcelain and paste,
Which never by your prudence was repressed,
May have been *pour quelque chose*
Your scion to dispose
To extravagance in living—and the rest.

O peevish dame and pale,
With fan and farthingale,
Sure the vials of your vapours I've unsealed,
In your *milieu* so exotic,
And your humours so neurotic,
Are the sources of my *décadence* revealed.

Prithee, had not you, sir knight,
Of complexion pink and white,
A very pretty power in your face
For fluttering the lives
Of other people's wives?
Now I wonder have I got that special grace!

To cut my burden short,
It is rather rough to thwart
A soul that would propriety pursue;
When I want to be a saint,
Says Hereditary Taint,
"Better do a little sinning"—and I do!

THE PASSION FOR PACE

That we live in a mighty mercurial age,
With precipitancy in plenty,
Is a truth that must be both by simple and sage
Granted, *nemine contradicente.*
For if we the race for existence regard,
The man for a place is not in it,
Who, whatever the stakes he selects on life's card,
Cannot cover a mile in a minute.

"Push on," is the end-of-the-century *mot*,
To the winning of spoils ever fresher,
Try always than others one better to go,
Ne'er relax or the pace or the pressure!
Would you turn from the cult of the lucrative god
To bless, or to bury, a brother?
You will find if (like Homer) a moment you nod,
That your seat is filled up by another.

We may fly to the North, we may hie to the South,
To hemisphere Western or Eastern;
Though for leisure's refreshment may water our mouth,
To no quarter our steps can for peace turn.
Yet faster, and faster's, becoming the speed
In every sort and condition,
And if we for breathing time dare intercede,
We're choked off by the word "Competition."

Scant time can we find for the making of mind
In such merciless mangling of matter,
Yet in chat of some kind we must not be behind,
So of culture we snatch at a smatter.
Thus our "letters" we learn, with their P's and their Q's,
From some pseudonym sexual transgressions,
And our Science from Pythagorean reviews,
And our Art from pure Paphian "impressions."

What wonder we pule of deciduous health,
Of degenerate nerves and digestions?
Let the fight for position, the wrestle for wealth,
Reply to such querulous questions.

Though some may pretend, with a cynical grin,
That it's racket makes life the more racy,
The sportsman who'd Fortune's emoluments win
Will find no *requiescat in pace.*

HOW TO BE A HEDONIST

[*Extract from a letter of advice to a young man about to enter the world, purporting to come from one Grant Chesterfield.*]

Now, first, all ideas altruistic
You must speedily place on the shelf,
And cultivate only the mystic,
And wonderful, worship of self.
Allow no absurd estimations
Of duty to lead you astray,
And cast off your nearest relations,
If they happen to stand in your way.

Let your happiness be your pursuing;
True virtue will walk in its wake;
The claims of another eschewing,
Only thought for yourself you must take.
To do a kind action is idle,
Unless you've the *flair* of some gain;
Is anything more suicidal
Than giving one's feelings the rein?

Have you any ascetical notion
Regarding the instincts of sex?
A course of unlicensed emotion
Such prejudice frequently checks.
After some few æsthetic suggestions
You'll soon feel at home with the nude,
And chat with the girls upon questions
Once thought to be shockingly rude.

. . . . . .

Be your fame that of painter, or poet,
Politician, leech, lawyer, or mime,
Get your converts with trumpets to blow it
Through every country and clime.
Develop yourself: 'tis no matter
What souls you may crush to that end—
Only pray, 'mid the shrines that you shatter,
One holds not the heart of a friend.

THE COMPLEAT FEMALE ANGLER

(A FEW HINTS FOR HUSBAND-FISHING)

THE season's at hand
When love's in demand,
And hearts are beginning to "rise";
To young and to old
The same story is told,
In the blue of the seas and the skies.
But swains may be shy,
And sweetings must vie
In getting their tackle in gear—
So, oyez, each spinster
Who hopes in the minster
Of Hymen one day to appear!

If a peer you would catch,
A grace you must snatch
Beyond all the reaches of Art,
And make him aware,
By your thoroughbred air,
What repute to his life you'd impart.

His vanity flatter
On every matter,
Admit his superior brain,
Vow he's an Apollo
(What won't a man swallow!),
And perhaps you'll not angle in vain.

If you seek to ensnare
A millionaire
Who can never an ancestor boast,
Of all the relations
You've got in high stations
Adroitly be making the most.
In the Park, by his side,
Let your family pride
Flout all who are not in "Debrett";
With some delicate touches,
As—"There's the dear Duchess!"
One day that goldfish you may net.

A widowertry
To hook with an eye
O'erflowing with sympathy's dew;

The bereaved 'twill persuade
To replace his dear shade
Is no substance so fitting as you.
Though to "forty" you've blown,
Yet a *tendresse* you own
For some nice but necessitous wight,
Just shower the shekels,
And, crow's feet or freckles,
In time the sweet minnow will bite.

Whatever you do,
Don't affect to be "New,"
And publish your views upon sex;
Don't cut off your hair,
Or your *corsetière*,
And your figure *affublez* in checks.
Though probably men
May be found, now and then,
In wonderful waters to woo,
Those, worthy the baiting,
Prefer for their mating
The woman to womanhood true.

BALLADE OF THE BUFFOON

"A merry fellow was never yet a respectable man."
—Lord Chesterfield.

To him the world's a juggler's joke,
A carnival of mummers gay,
A comedy where puppet-folk
Their foibles and their faults display.
In roguish rhyme and roundelay
The tale of destiny he tells,
And lightly laughs the years away—
The man who wears the cap and bells.

With Love he many a lance has broke;
All hearts to him are lawful prey;
He rends the sentimental cloak
That masks our poor erotic clay.
An epigram—and crowns decay,
The halo from the saint dispels:
No virtues ever can dismay
The man who wears the cap and bells.

He yields to no conventional yoke,
No hours are sacred in his day;
Let other lips the gods invoke,
He plays where most are prone to pray.
And when his debt he has to pay,
And crumbling are his cranium cells,
Upon a wreathless wain they lay
The man who wears the cap and bells.

But then, no ills his flesh betray,
No care his soul to spleen compels,
His liver never goes astray,
The man who wears the cap and bells.

THE DOMESTIC DOLORES

Don't we know our domestic Dolores,
Is she not always with us, poor dear,
With her patient and pitiful stories
Of a candidly cashless career?
When, in quest of some weird occupation,
Our aid and advice she convenes,
Then she's somewhat a trying relation,
The lady of limited means.

She would offer her *maisonette*, "charming
In homelike refinement," to share,
At a figure not very alarming
With a youthful and newly wed pair.
Take out to dance, dinner, or supper,
Some Baltimore belle in her 'teens,
Who should move in the circles called "upper"
With the lady of limited means.

Sub rosâ she'll traffic in bonnets,
In bric-à-brac, cigarettes, cats,
Or supply with acrostics and sonnets
The "weeklies,"—or decorate flats.
She will e'en undertake "interviewing,"
But *gare* how your secrets she gleans,
Or the eloquent pen you'll be rueing
Of the lady of limited means.

O head that oft aches with contriving
However both ends are to meet,
O hands that are weary of striving
To keep life's poor livery neat,
With the cares of this world overladen,
To you all our sympathy leans—
Here's luck, be she matron or maiden,
To the lady of limited means!

OVER THE FISHPOND TO FASHION

(NEW RENDERING OF AN OLD RHYME OVERHEARD BETWEEN NEW YORK AND LIVERPOOL)

"WHERE are you going to, my pretty maid?"
"Into Society, stranger," she said.

"How will you get there, adventurous maid?"
"I guess I've a 'pile' that will do it," she said.

"What doors shall you knock at, pecunious maid?"
"Why, *the* very smartest, you bet," she said.

"How will you get on with the women, bold maid?"
"I'll make them sit up with my frocks," she said.

"And what of the men, ingenuous maid?"
"Have the best of them fussing around me," she said.

"Pray, whom shall you marry, omnipotent maid?"
"The most elegant lord I can find," she said.

"What is your father, redoubtable maid?"
"A spook, I suppose, since he's dead," she said.

"And where is your mother, irreverent maid?"
"She'll be fixing her 'bangs' against dinner," she said.

"What is your fortune, most whimsical maid?"
"'Way down in Chicago, in hogs," she said.

"O may I come with you, my beautiful maid?"
"Why, yes, if you're 'in' with the swells," she said.

"And supposing I'm not, irresistible maid?"
"Then I reckon you needn't apply," she said.

"Ah, you'll soon be the fashion, you 'cute little maid."
"That's so: what do *you* think? Bye-bye," she said.

THE REVOLT OF THE DOWAGERS

Time was when women, as their summers waned,
The art of gently growing old attained,
Laid gracefully their girlish airs aside,
And welcomed age with dignity and pride.
Nous avons changé tout cela. Their cry,
"We won't grow old," now rises to the sky,
"We'll still contrive to captivate the town,"
And Art to Nature throws the gauntlet down.

Behold, advance the dowager up to date,
Armed at all points mankind to subjugate.
What though she owns to forty—and the rest,
How skilfully preserved, how deftly dressed!
Her auburn tresses with her daughter's vie
(The selfsame hairdresser does each supply).
Smooth is her cheek, no wrinkles rankle there,
Massage can all such ravages repair.
Cheery her laugh, a twinkle in her eye,
Her tongue quite ready for a smart reply,

The *argot* of the hour she understands,
And scandal is a fine art in her hands.
She's never bored, at least she never shows it.
And never cross? Her husband, only, knows it.
What wonder she annexes more attention
Than all the little misses you could mention?

She rarely in the morning is on view,
Queen Morphine brings a drowsy retinue.
At lunch she wears a simple, dove-like mien,
To match the frock that's fit for seventeen.
At dinner—blessèd be those candle shades!—
But, O ye draughts, revere her shoulder blades!
At supper, over chicken and champagne,
She'll give her naughty narratives the rein.
For nothing daunts her, no, not e'en the dance,
Where maids sit out, and matrons boldly prance.
She waltzes with the very youngest man,
And says the drollest things behind her fan.
So trips, triumphant, on her social way
The *débonnaire* duenna of the day.

Come, madam, to yourself for once confess
That every decade has its proper dress,

And garlands, that beseem a maiden's bower,
But ill adorn a mediæval tower.
So then, admitting with a genial grace
The truths that Time has traced upon your face,
Your life shall prove a pleasure to your "set,"
Your death will be a matter for regret.

A DIFFERENCE IN DIGESTION

(BALLADE À DOUBLE REFRAIN)

[*Our appreciation of existence is largely influenced by the state of our health. Thus dyspepsia will engender pessimism, while optimism waits upon a good digestion. Hear the rival voices!*]

"ALL's for the worst on this sorry sphere,
Man's is a span of martyrdom,
Worry and woe from birth to bier—
Life's a march to a muffled drum."
"All's for the best whate'er may come,
Bid the querulous tongue be mute,
Cover the face that's grey and glum—
Life's a dance to fiddle and flute."

"Vain and vext is our brief career,
Rarely we pluck the coveted plum,
However we plod and persevere—
Life's a march to a muffled drum."

"Only the craven souls succumb,
Who tends the flower shall taste the fruit;
What is success but labour's sum?—
Life's a dance to fiddle and flute."

"Upon our board, uncharmed by cheer,
Never of comfort falls a crumb;
Friends? they're all of them insincere—
Life's a march to a muffled drum."
"Nay, for the hand of an honest chum,
The heart of a maid beyond dispute,
Love's are the sweetest airs to hum—
Life's a dance to fiddle and flute."

"Fate, thy bondage is burdensome—
Life's a march to a muffled drum."
"Fortune, we bid thee come at our suit—
Life's a dance to fiddle and flute."

THE SISTERS OF THE CIGARETTE

(BY ONE OF THEM)

Now, 'tis really quite a shame
For the sterner sex to blame,
Without heed,
All their sisters who may find
Consolation to the mind
In a "weed."

Pray, why shouldn't we enjoy
That most tranquillising toy,
Now and then?
Why should custom thus confine
Such a pleasant anodyne
To you men?

Our lives are just as harried,
Be we single—be we married—
As are yours.
(Ah! the suffering unknown
That a woman, without moan,
Oft endures!)

And you say tobacco serves
The tension of your nerves
To unloose;
Let the sauce good for the gander
Then be seasoned, without slander,
For the goose!

In the small domestic round
What annoyances are found,
Day by day!
In this dropping-well of cares
The soft stone of patience wears
Quite away.

When at seven Madame Vine
Sends the gown, that I must dine
Out at eight in,
And the sleeve is put in wrong,
And the skirt is miles too long
To walk straight in;

When my treasure of a cook
Wears a supercilious look
As I ask—

Why the joint that yestere'en
Seemed so plump is now so lean?
(Morning task!);

When that scatterbrained Sophia
Disregards the drawing-room fire,
And the boy,
That in buttons I have placed,
Shows a bacchanalian taste
For "the boy";

Why, when all these petty woes
Make a total big as those
Borne by man,
Mayn't we have the blessèd chance
Our comfort to advance,
If we can?

It should be a female "grief"—
That our temper such relief
Must forego
That a "Melachrino" sweet,
In its *papillote* so neat,
Could bestow.

COMING THRO' THE RHYME!

"*Difficilis ascensus Parnassi.*"—ANON.

Ho! the merry minor poet,
Gaily coming thro' the rhyme;
Though his feet may never show it,
Hard the hill he has to climb.

Hurtled oft by critic boulders,
Scaling editorial banks,
Bearing on his sacred shoulders
Baggage marked "Declined with thanks."

On he goes, his verses spinning,
Some to praise and some to blame,
With but slender hope of winning
Honours in the house of Fame.

He o'er lover's pranks shall puzzle,
Who forgets, and who forgives,
Every inclination muzzle
For those fatal adjectives.

Winnow from the wealth of "Walker"
Assonances meet to mate,—
"Love," methinks, must be a "corker"
Now that "dove" is out of date.

When celebrities expire,
As they do in divers modes,
He shall tune his quill and quire
To obituary odes.

Eke invoke his inspiration
From the world's last crazy heed,
Or in "couplets of creation"
Crystallise the newest creed.

But, when creditors do chirrup,
He must deign his purse to fill
With a sonnet to a syrup,
Or a pæan to a pill.

Whoso picnics on Parnassus
Need not look for cakes and ale,
Yet the climbers ever pass us—
Don't we know them in their trail?

Never mind, O happy poet,
Yours may be the better time,
Only be discreet, and "stow it,"
When the bloom is off the rhyme!

MARRIAGE À LA MODE

He. If I to you an offer make,
(We're both, I think, quite wide awake)
Would you with me then undertake
Connubial relations?
She. Before we any further go,
Some points there are I wish to know—
Your present income, what you owe,
And future expectations.

He. Your *prévenance* I do commend,
Business and beauty rarely blend;
A schedule of accounts I'll send,
Forthwith, for your inspection.
She. If this should satisfaction give,
I might with you contrive to live;
Oh, pray don't be demonstrative!—
Affaires before affection.

He. Of course, you fully understand,
I don't relinquish with my hand
Those pastimes, *quand même* contraband,
To which I've an adherence.
She. And, *en revanche*, I shall expect
My own behaviour to direct,
My friends (of either sex) select
Without your interference.

He. All smart society I hate—
My club I greatly cultivate—
I often come in very late—
But these are mere suggestions.
She. If not to bore me you will try,
And pay my bills without a—sigh,
And leave me well off when you die,
I shan't ask any questions.

He. We ought to be a great success,
We've each for self such thoughtfulness—
How odd! The way you talk, you dress,
You're just like Carrie Crompton!

She. So glad—her photo's in my book,
To copy her such pains I took,
I always do my best to look
As if I lived in Brompton.

He. I really like you more and more,
I never was so "hit" before;
If you to hope but ope the door,
Well, there—I'd give up Carrie!
She. If I before the season's wane
A better *parti* can't obtain,
I might—if ways and means are plain—
Be tempted you to marry.

DIOGENES EN VOYAGE

(BALLADE OF HIS PERILS BY HIS OWN COUNTRYMEN)

O is there one spot in the Alps that ne'er
  Has yet been trod by the tourist's toe—
One nook where the traveller may repair,
  Unvexed by the cohorts of Cook and Co.?
If there be, pray, somebody let me know,
  And I'll give that some one a grateful hand;
For the Cantons swarm with the Philistine foe,
  The trail of the tripper is over the land.

There's naught too sacred for him to spare:
  I find him high, where the edelweiss grow;
He romps about on the glacier there,
  And picnics on peaks of perpetual snow.
I find him low, where Casinos blow,
Capering round to some German band;
I cannot escape him wherever I go—
  The trail of the tripper is over the land.

For him the hills no mystery wear,
He calls the sunrise a "rippin' show,"
He crosses the pass *en chemin de fer*,
And the waterfall lights with electric glow.
He crowds the inns till they overflow,
And stamps on their tariff his golden brand;
What wonder with him that I pluck a crow?—
The trail of the tripper is over the land.

Progress! Maybe, I am somewhat slow,
But this "playground of Europe" no more I'll stand;
Back to my tub I'll haste—for, lo!
The trail of the tripper is over the land.

ST. CECILIA, M.D.

When Music, heavenly maid, was young,
She diffidently held her tongue
De rebus scientific;
Content her airs alone should please,
Should make the frigid breast unfreeze,
The savage soul pacific.

But Music, now a matron old,
Has waxed proportionately bold,
And starts a choral college,
To cure the body's neediness,
And emulate the R.C.S.
In therapeutic knowledge.

Sweet visions fill the gentle mind,
Gifted with milk of human kind-
ness, and imagination,
Of operations on the sick,
Achieved with quaint orchestral trick,
And vocal variation.

Such dulcet drugs would be distilled
For those who practise what the guild
So eloquently preaches—
Gavottes to help the man who halts,
And *suites* to take the place of "salts,"
And lullabys of leeches.

A rhythmic *recipe* might read—
"Take first of Brahms' one *liebes-lied*,
A *scena* by Beethoven,
'My pretty Jane'—'Should he upbraid'—
A verse of Gounod's 'Serenade,'
With *obbligato* woven.

"Add—if the symptoms urgent be—
Some portions of a Mass in B,
An *aria* from 'Norma';
Perform this programme to the end,
Until the pulse begins to mend,
Th' extremities get warmer."

Specifics doubtless will be found,
Affichés far as "world-renowned,"
Sponsored by some Tone-master;

Thus Gluck might cut out *eau de* Dill,
And Mendelssohn replace a pill,
And Meyerbeer a plaster.

The "Lyric Lancet" shall relate,
How, at a monster Wagner-*fête*
(The brass *sempre crescendo*),
One hundred limbs were cleft in twain,
And yet was heard no sound of pain,
(*Absit* all innuendo!)

But let not some poor *névrose* trust
His too impressionable dust
To treatment so æsthetic;
Or St. Cecilia, on the sly,
Might raise her patient to the sky
In manner energetic.

SPRING'S DELIGHTS

(LINES FOUND IN THE ALBUM OF A VERY MODERN YOUNG LADY)

THE Spring's once again at our portals,
The sun's peeping in at our panes;
And e'en of the meanest of mortals
The blood bubbles up in the veins.
Let those who like pastoral pleasures,
Of daisies and buttercups sing;
But for me—in the town, and its treasures,
I find the delights of the Spring.

It bores me to flatter the flowers
About their habitual bloom,
To list to the song-birds for hours,
And haply engender a rheum.
I've no great regard for the throstle,
The lilac, laburnum, or lark;
I much prefer shoulders to jostle
With the people I meet in the Park.

To me give the fashions to study,
A suitable colour to find
For cheeks that are *tant soit peu* ruddy—
A toilette that Worth has designed.
Are blouses to be the new bodice?
Shall skirts on a crinoline swing?
Will one look like a guy or a goddess
In the bonnets that bloom in the Spring?

O to pass a fine morning in shopping,
Perchance a few pictures to see;
In the afternoon driving, and dropping
In at somebody's "musical tea";
At night in a smart little *coupé*
One's way to the Gaiety wing,
Then home to a snug *petit souper*—
Are not these the delights of the Spring?

Enfin, to the praise of the poet
I relinquish the lambs, and the fields,
And the first breath of Spring (don't I know it,
With the coughs and the colds that it yields?)

Yet although I have, seemingly, ran down
All rural delights—if you please,
There's a "field" that I'm fond of at Sandown,
And a lamb—that's a cutlet with peas.

AMONG THE SHEAVES OF EXPERIENCE

(A LENTEN LYRIC)

"*Thistles grow instead of wheat, and cockle instead of barley.*"—The Book of Job.

Tout passe! So youth first wends its way
Across oblivion's dreary wold:
To later lips the kisses stray
That once our own were wont to hold.
And fresher fame than ours receives
The happy homage of the crowd;
Malicious Fortune ever weaves
Our chrisom with our shroud.

Tout casse! Our faith in all things fair
Lies buried 'neath their shattered shrines.
The house of hopes we raised with care
Some hidden mildew undermines.
That life, which in the closest bond
Love linked and welded to our own,
Obeys the cruel call beyond,
And now we walk alone.

Tout lasse! O last and saddest word;
The flag of all enjoyment furled,
Drifts on the wearied heart, unstirred
By any whisper from the world.
The springtime has no tale to tell,
The summer brings nor flower nor friend—
Only within a shadowed cell
The waiting for the end.

A THAMES IDYL

(IN THREE RONDEAUX)

I

O SUMMER morn, at whose warm touch all eyes
Unlock their lids from slumber's chill constraint,
At whose behest the sun sets forth to paint
A grateful world with all its blithe disguise,
Hie to the chamber where my love yet lies,
Whiten her lattice, dissipate the taint
Of night, and in fond undertones, and faint,
Reveal the secret of my diligent sighs,
O summer morn!

My herald thou. Her maiden's heart acquaint
With my expectancy of her that cries,
"Ah, will she come?" And if such amorous plaint
Should to this stream her steps (through thee) advise,
So would I hold thee blessèd in such wise,
O summer morn!

II

My love is here! Now sun and shadow share
Dominion o'er the wandering waterway.
The constant oars, that wooed th' inconstant spray,
Leisurely slacken; and through the quivering air
We two float on. In each green tuft and tare
Flushes the heart-beat of the fervent day;
Bird flings to bird the circling roundelay,
Echoing back from every leafy lair,—
"My love is here!"

All through the sumptuous afternoon's array
We dream our dream, our Paradise prepare.
Then, holding incredulity at bay,
Our liberal lips all alien troths forswear,
And in one unconditional kiss declare
"My love is *here!*"

III

When twilight fell, and the last linnet slept,
We rang Farewell's sad changes, she and I.
Indorsed the truth of that disquieting "Ay,

'Tis death to part;" and, as the strings we swept
Of Passion's harp, each proved yet more adept
Than other every dissonance to untie.
"To-morrow, ah, our vows shall ratify."
Then, tearful, on our several ways we crept,
When twilight fell.

No more we met. For Duty's sudden cry
"To arms!" in urgent form (a "wire" yclept)
Brooked no denial. Still, I did not die.
And she, methinks, full many a tryst has kept
Beside th' accommodating stream—and wept,
When twilight fell.

HOLIDAY TRIOLETS

ON A YACHT

Yo heave ho, how the breeze does blow—
I look a little pale, you say?
Do I feel—? Never; 'pon my— O!
Yo heave ho, how the breeze *does* blow!
Perhaps I'd better go below—
No, thanks, not any lunch to-day.
Yo heave ho, how the breeze does blow—
I look a little pale, you say?

AT A WATER-CURE

Six glasses, daily, must I drink
Of soda and carbonic acid;
Until my waist begins to shrink,
Six glasses, daily, must I drink.
The dullest life on earth, I think,
Is the life that's punctual and placid.
Six glasses, daily, must I drink
Of soda and carbonic acid.

BY THE SEA-SIDE

To saunter on the same old pier,
And listen to the same old band—
I' faith, there's nothing else but, here,
To saunter on the same old pier,
Salute again the same old leer,
Squeeze once again the same old hand,
To saunter on the same old pier,
And listen to the same old band.

AMONG THE MOORS

Mist to the front, and mist behind,
And a pal who every bird will bag—
I didn't come so far to find
Mist to the front, and mist behind.
There, missed again! I've half a mind
That supercilious fool to gag.
Mist to the front, and mist behind,
And a pal who every bird *will* bag.

INSIDE A CASINO

Voulez-vous danser? Bless me! no,
Mamselle, though *merci* all the same.

I'll have a shot at "*p'tits chevaux*"—
Voulez-vous danser? Bless me! no.
What, last again, my "gee"? Hullo!
Ten francs I've dropped at this beastly game!
Voulez-vous danser? Bless me! no,
Mamselle, though *merci* all the same.

BACK IN LONDON

There's nothing half so sweet—as Town
When all the *beau monde* is away,
When every well-bred blind is down,
There's nothing half so sweet as Town.
In mufti clad, no fashion's frown,
No bores to feed, no calls to pay—
There's nothing half so sweet as Town
When all the *beau monde* is away.

LINES TO A KID

"Only consider what the skin out of which gloves are made has passed through! The life of a little kid is sacrificed for each pair."—Tea-Table Talk.

When Fashion sent a firman forth
That hands should hide their native worth,
And be with gloves invested,
What panic must have seized thy kin
When first, O kid, thy supple skin
As fitting was suggested!

Torn, all unweaned, from mother's side,
Never to browse o'er pastures wide,
Nor over hill and dell rove;
But, dead and dyed, to find divine,
Apotheosis at the shrine
Of Marshall and of Snelgrove.

No pleasant pastimes thee await,
No noses rubbed *en tête-à-tête*,
(What flirting can be terser?)

If Nanny thou—shall Billy ne'er
With bleat and bound thy heart ensnare,
If Billy—*vice versâ.*

A calf with "points," by taking pains,
The rank of sirloin oft attains,
And lambs may rise to muttons;
But all the honour that is made
For thee's to be a *gant du suède*,
With twelve or fourteen buttons.

Yet wert thou conscious of the charm
That circles round a soft white arm,
Thy lot were not so cruel;
How many an envious lad would try
To crush thy close monopoly,
And fight with thee a duel!

Poor innocent! couldst thou but guess
That half the *tenue* in their dress
Belles from thy fleece now borrow!
So let thy epitaph appear:—
"Peace to the bones of one who, here
To-day, is *gant* to-morrow!"

A CAPTIOUS CATECHISM

(FOR USE AMONG SUCH AS ARE OF RIPER YEARS)

WHAT's the world, rich man?—No doubt, very pleasant;
But I've really no time for amusement at present.

What's the world, poor man?—In grinding employment
The missing of all that gives life its enjoyment.

What's the world, soldier?—A race hardly run,
Where the prizes by favour, not merit, are won.

What's the world, parson?—A school of preferment,
Where the dean lies in wait for the bishop's interment.

What's the world, doctor?—A sphere where I thrive
On the fees that fools give me to keep them alive.

What's the world, lawyer?—A court of contention,
Of knavery, folly, and things we don't mention.

What's the world, author?—A masque, where my brain
Plays Abel to every critical Cain.

What's the world, critic?—A mill, where I break
Many hopes on my wheel for bread-and-cheese' sake.

What's the world, mummer?—A stage, where my vanity
Basks in the "bravos" of gushing humanity.

What's the world, amateur?—Where the swell throng
Give me meals in exchange for my antics and song.

What's the world, mothers?—A sorry campaign,
With a limited income, and daughters all plain.

What's the world, spinster?—Where a husband I'd buy;
But I find the demand much exceeds the supply.

What's the world, M.P.?—A plane, whence to rise
To the platform of power on the ladder of lies.

What's the world, Paddy?—Beshrew, 'tis a stool
Of repentance for those who coquet with Home Rule.

What's the world, Jonathan?—Guess, where my dollars
Can take the starch out of the most stuck-up collars.

What's the world, bobby?—Where, nightly, I learn
How nearly to beasts men and women can turn.

What's the world, wise man?—(on you no aspersion,
Dear reader)—There's not one to give me his version.

BALLADE OF LOST LAUGHTER

> "*Toys of a practical character; dolls that instil correct notions into the young mind; merry games and pastimes combining pleasure with instruction.*"
>
> —Vide Advertisement.

When our toys shall begin to talk, and explain
What youth should esteem and what eschew;
When our games *à la mode* shall all contain
The germs of the beautiful, good, and true;
When children (poor wights!) their sports pursue
In a spirit of culture remarkably high,
We shall sigh, as to fooling we whisper "Adieu,"
"O for the laughter of days gone by!"

When a ripple of moral receipts shall rain
From the rosy-lipped doll with the gaze so blue;
When Noah in his ark shall treat with disdain
"That erroneous account of the Deluge due
To Moses;" when all the tin-soldiery crew
Compulsory shelving shall sharply decry;
When the gilt is gone from the gimp and the glue,
Then O for the laughter of days gone by!

In the nursery scorn they'll entertain
For "Blind Man's Buff," and "Hunt the Shoe;"
The "King of the Castle" shall cease to reign,
And "Puss in the Corner" forget her mew;
In the "Family Coach" for a place shall sue,
Mammal, mollusc, and all the ascidian fry,
(From a pure evolutionist point of view)
And where'll be the laughter of days gone by?

Goddess of merriment, flouted by few,
To whom for frolic and fun we fly,
May we never have cause to say to you,
"O for the laughter of days gone by!"

"A LITTLE MUSIC"

Prithee, does society
Do its duty properly
To its neighbour, when it ventures to enthral him
In that state of martyrdom,
Be it rout or kettledrum,
To which the words "At Home" have pleased to call him?

"A little music" seems
Just to realise our dreams
Of how to pass a pure and pleasing hour;
But sweet dreams are left behind
When, arriving there, we find
That the amateurs have got us in their power.

Packed like sardines in a box,
Spoiling "buttonholes" and frocks,
Calmly callous (through habitual endurance)

To the high soprano's shake,
Or the deep contralto's "break,"
Or the tenor's *mezza voce* and assurance,

There we stand, a melting crowd,
To whom speech is disallowed,
Save his "Bravo!" to the sycophant (the sinner!);
Till at midnight, two and two,
We are marshalled down to view
The relics of the late lamented dinner.

"A little music"—O,
Those afternoons of woe,
Striking terror to the heart of every true man!
"Four to seven"—can't we see
Martha pouring out the tea,
And Mary pouring out her soul in Schumann?

The truth is, people like
Their own ideas to strike
On the touchwood of some sympathising tinder,
And will often vote a bore,
What they otherwise adore,
If it chance a *causerie intime* to hinder.

So, mine hostesses, forego
Your "little music" show:
Would the prospect of your guests then seem alarming?
Nay, let them chat and chaff,
And a "special cuvée" quaff,
And they'll vow your parties "really quite too charming!"

TO THE GLORY OF GOSSIP

Hail, Gossip! goddess of the giddy throng
That cluster at the shrines of Idleness,
Where Tittle's strophes in a scandal-song
With Tattle's antistrophes acquiesce.

Divinity of diligent dispraise,
With shrug and sneer is cast thy shibboleth;
Thine airiest touch can crumple honour's bays,
And all the virtues tarnish at thy breath.

What skill is thine in dislocating truth,
In joining half of good to half of ill!
Thou over-rid'st all reverence and ruth,
Thy flippant whispers wanton at their will.

How choice the cackle thou can'st e'er promote
Where folk are gathered in some social fold!
To what could silly souls their tongues devote,
Wert thou thy quick'ning spirit to withhold?

Before thine altars, set for sacrifice,
A hecatomb of reputations lie;
When dowagers through usage lose their spice,
Then *débutantes* the savour shall supply.

Hail! for to thee the One of all its gods,
Society unites to bow the knee,
Hail, with thy wicked winks and noisome nods,
Deification of the dread "*on dit*"!

THE MAGNIFICAT OF MAGDALEN

"And when could Satire boast so fair a field;
Say, when did Vice a richer harvest yield."
—Juvenal.—Gifford's trans.

Ye gentlemen who serve the British drama
With all the wit and wisdom of your pen,
Who from a highly cultivated Karma
Evolve your views of manners and of men,

I would but ask, as one whom oft an order
Admits, a worshipper, within your fanes,
Why, by degrees, your plays are growing broader?
(I trust the word sufficiently explains.)

Has decency so far gone out of fashion
That ye must needs, to catch the English folk,
Dip for your plots in troubled pools of passion,
And bait your lines with spicy *équivoque?*

Why are your personages so full-blooded,
Why nail such scarlet colours to your mast,
And hold aloft as "She-who-must-be-studied"
The lady of th' apologetic past?

How happy for the siren with a story
To find it's just the story that attracts,
And gives the owner for a quasi glory,
The halo of a prologue and three Acts!

She knows that by your Art she still is able
To keep in touch with fashionable life,
Her tale discussed at Virtue's dinner table,
Her toilettes copied e'en by Cæsar's wife.

How nice to be throughout a London season
The *point de mire* of every box and stall!
It gives irregularity a reason,
And almost might persuade a prude to fall.

La pêche à quinze sous is toothsome matter
For histrio-hysterical research,
And so of course the taste for fruit is flatter
That's honourably mentioned by the Church.

Surely, we're satiated with these sinnings,
As rotting lilies make the senses faint,
Why should not Innocence now have an innings,
And let the leading lady be a saint?

The earth, we know, is eloquent of evil,
But, marry, there's a deal of virtue left:
You are not forced to *kowtow* to the devil,
And deck him with artistic warp and weft.

So let some cleaner manners be recorded:
In younger years you tried it with success,
When vice with diamonds was not rewarded,
Nor virtue wrapped in drabs of dowdiness.

O give us some commendable creation,
In whose sweet company is no offence,
An honour to her sex and to her station,
Whom all could love, and loving, reverence.

Give us a woman with a healthy present,
Clean, pure, and stainless as our sisters are—
For just once in a way she would be pleasant,
And probably be truly popular.

I hear you say "The good is not inviting,
Respectability will always bore,
'Tis only by the lamps of licence lighting
We draw the public to the playhouse door."

Be your part, gentlemen, to try the question
If facts with such fine fancies correspond;
Be mine to humbly offer the suggestion,
No world is duller than the *demi-monde*.

OÙ VOULEZ-VOUS ALLER?

(MILLE EXCUSES À THÉOPHILE GAUTIER)

"SAY, where shall we hie for a summer spree?"
The father asked of his daughters three.

"Shall it be where 'Tout Paris' so gaily laves
Its struggle-for-lifers in Norman waves?

Or where John Bullion fondly fawns
Upon Royal flannels on Taunus lawns?

Shall we sanctuary seek *chez* St. Moritz,
Where cleric with *cabotin* friendship knits?

Or shall we for health the Highlands sue,
Where doubly distilled is the mountain dew?"

"Nay, father, away," cried the three in one,
Wild prayer, "to the land of the eldest son

Of an unencumbered estate, or where
Yet blooms the bachelor millionaire.

For seasons wake, but complexions wane,
And vanish the castles we reared in Spain.

Comes never the big fish home to our net,
The penniless minnows are all we get.

So lead us afar to some happy lands,
Where acceptable offers await our hands,

And where liberal settlements lull to rest
The foolish fears of the spinster's breast."

IN PRAISE OF PICNICS

(VIRGINIBUS PUERISQUE CANO)

WHEN our native summer weather
(Fickle as proverbial feather)
Turning torrid, makes the tether
  Of the town so hard to bear,
To the river off we scamper
With a hospitable hamper,
Palates all to please and pamper
  By its fascinating fare.

'Neath a canopy of beeches,
(In the way dame Nature teaches)
Lass and lad with jocund speeches
  One another entertain.
Mossy is their meadow-table,
Just as in a fairy fable,
And they laugh, as who are able
  When the blood is in the vein.

There, forgetting foolish fretting,
(Happy gift of youth's begetting)
Seem they, in their sylvan setting,
  Like some far Arcadian tune:
He, the faun of pipe and tabour,
Innocent of earthly labour;
She, the nymph, his willing neighbour
  For one golden afternoon.

And, among those dainty dishes,
(Fantasies of fowls and fishes)
Father to the thought the wish is
  Life should one long picnic be:
Cooling cups for ever sipping,
Into love's lore slily dipping,
While the stream is onward slipping
  To the silence of the sea.

THE NEW NARCISSUS

Since now it is the fashion, *sans* respect,
For Prose a charming candour to affect,
For novelists in morbid mire to wade,
And dramatists to call a spade a spade,
Should Rhyme be coy, refuse to follow suit,
And from unmodish modesty be mute?—
Courage, my pen, and help me to portray
A curious type—a "young man" of to-day.

Behold him mincing o'er the social stage,
The New Narcissus, *mignon* of his age!
How weird his ways, how willowy his walk,
So delicate his tones, so droll his talk!
How tight his waist, how loose appears his eye,
A rose his cheek, a butterfly his tie!
His room's a show of photographs and flowers,
Greek nudities, French novels, Roman "Hours,"
(These last he keeps because the paths of Piety
Sometimes do lead to certain good Society);

Well dressed, well fed, lapped in luxurious ease,
His one anxiety—himself to please,
He asks what most in life is worth his care,
Looks in the glass, and finds the answer there.

Nature here seems irresolute in plan,
Coquetting with a woman and a man;
For all the little vices he affects
(Without the virtues) of the softer sex;
Which, crowned with most devout self-admiration,
Gives of our *décadent* some explanation.
He live without excitement? rather death,
And scandal of his nostrils is the breath.
He smiles—a pretty story he could tell;
He sighs—and sends his dearest friend to hell;
He'd be a cynic, but his sense is slight,
His wit impertinence, his satire spite.
Excels he not in pastimes nor in sport,
Five-o'clock pleasantries are more his forte;
He'll set to music some erotic sonnet,
And rear an epigram around a bonnet.
He may not know a partridge from a pheasant,
But then his chats on *chiffons* are so pleasant.

Indifferent to tips about the winner,
He longs to join the ladies after dinner;
For in their gentler gossip he will find
Amusement more congenial to his mind.
No science brews for him a knowledge-cup,
No art allures—save that of "making up."
He squanders all his *menus-plaisirs* pence
On cabs, carnations, cigarettes, and scents;
And if his means won't gratify his ends,
He will in turn *exploiter* all his friends.
Self, only self! Let others work and weep,
So long as he in silken sheets can sleep,
And all his worshippers obey his nod,
And sacrifice to their neurotic god.

Trip on, Narcissus; time and truth defy,
Until of your own charms you droop and die.
And, when your pampered person is cremated,
Society may be congratulated.

BALLADE OF EQUALITY

(A DOUBLE REFRAIN)

WHEN the wind's in the east, and the snow's in the street,
And I've nothing to drink, and little to wear,
And Dives rolls by with his sables and suite,
"All men should be equal!" I grimly declare.
But when curtly I'm asked from my body to tear
My favourite suit, and my scarf to untie,
To share with some loafer who calls me his *frère*,
That all men *are* equal, I gravely deny.

As I tramp through the land on my two dusty feet,
Of acres and ancestors blameless and bare;
As I gaze on his lordship's historical seat,
"All men should be equal!" I grimly declare.
But when impudent demagogues openly dare
To assert that with Tom, Dick, and Harry must I
My inherited freehold obligingly share,
That all men *are* equal, I gravely deny.

When children of prince and of peasant I meet
With scintillant faces and redolent hair,
Each bearing a guileless expression so sweet,
"All men should be equal!" I grimly declare.
But when in the dusk I see homeward repair
The brave in the battle of life, and descry
The renegades reel in the gin-palace glare,
That all men *are* equal, I gravely deny.

Jean Jacques, when entrapped in your sentiment-snare,
"All men should be equal!" I grimly declare;
But when Reason to Rousseau returns a reply,
That all men *are* equal, I gravely deny.

TO AN AMBER NECKLET

Coil gently round her throat of snow,
Lie lightly, so she scarce may know
Your circling presence there;
Let the chaste shadow that ye throw
Yield with her breath's soft ebb and flow,
Its cadence faint to share.

Beads, clear as glance of maiden pure,
Or clouded as a moon obscure
Held in a winter haze,
Your plea to primogeniture
Stands o'er all amulets secure,
Traced from Homeric days.

Are ye such tears as anguish drew
From pines when men arose to hew
Boughs from th' unblemish'd bole?
Did Time congeal the golden dew
That gathered round each tortured thew,
Sighs of a sylvan soul?

If ye have virtue to protect
With charmèd touch (as some affect)
From churlish airs and chill,
So let no wandering wind direct
A blast oblique, through disrespect,
To work my lady ill.

While yet around her neck so fair
Ye cling in ravished rapture there,
As courtiers to a throne,
So may no wanton zephyr dare
Her peace to stir, an she do wear
Your prophylactic zone.

SOME ACCOUNT OF A "FREE" PLAY

(BEING A LETTER FROM A LADY IN TOWN TO HER FRIEND IN THE COUNTRY)

You may smile, but I'm perfectly ready
To vouch for the statement, my dear,
That last night I persuaded poor Freddy
A drama of Ibsen's to hear.
I stand on no critical daïs,
You know I don't pose as a prude,
But all I can say of that play is—
I thought it excessively rude.

The heroine—well, to my thinking
No better she was than should be;
Just fancy a parlourmaid winking
As she asks for the cellaret key!
No wonder her young master kissed her
As she poured out his *café-au-lait*,
But she turned out to be his own sister,
And there was *le diable* to pay!

The hero, I don't mind confessing,
Was rather attractive at first,
Till he really became *too* depressing
With the ills that he seemed to be cursed.
And at last he proceeded to rétail
Some taint in his blood that did lurk,
With an artless attention to detail
Only fit for a medical work.

His widowed mamma seemed to suffer
From permanent spooks on the brain;
Her husband, a shocking old buffer,
Came cropping up always again.
She talked, in a way I daren't hint on,
Of marriage, its sun and its shade,
That would scare even Mrs. Lynn Linton,
With all her connubial crusade.

In this choice little family-drama
There's a carpenter given to *schnaps*,
And a sort of parochial Grand Lama,
Not guiltless of arson, perhaps.

And they all have the Decalogue broken
Through some simple inherited taste,
And their views upon love are outspoken
In chatter you couldn't call chaste.

Now why should the public be bidden
To gloat with a morbid delight
Upon vice, that is usually hidden
From Society's virtuous sight?
Art surely should offer suggestions
Of what may refine and refresh,
Not ventilate uncanny questions
About the corruptions of flesh.

THE SORROWFUL SPONGE

"Any principle which secures food to the individual without the expenditure of work is injurious."
—Henry Drummond.

The season is over, its dainties are dead,
There's nobody now to be feeding or fed;
And I'm left alone
To make my moan,
As I loathingly toy with my mutton-bone.

Alas! for my lord with his fare so free,
There was ever a knife and a fork for me;
But he's off to take,
For his gout's grim sake,
The waters that Homburg knows how to make.

All her ladyship's lunches have faded and gone,
Twice a week they could quite be depended upon;
But she's flown to repair,
In the Engadine air,
Her nerves that are rather the worse for wear.

And dear old Johnny, who's always good
For any amount of occasional food,
Has steered his yacht
To the coast of the Scot—
But to carry me with him, this year, forgot.

O dreary to ramble through fashion's mains,
To count the daily papering panes,
To rollick on tea
At an "A. B. C.,"
And dream of the dinners that used to be!

O weary to wait for the world's return,
For the beacons of welcome again to burn,
For the joints to roast,
For the cakes to toast,
And every corner to harbour a host!

And I nervously question myself once more—
Have I really become such a terrible bore,
That not one friend
Invites me to spend
A week in the country?—may life then end.

PUSS ON PEGASUS

(A MEW FOR MERCY)

AWAKE, my lyric mews,
And help me to diffuse
Some pity in mankind for my relations,
When, their masters all away
For a summer holiday,
They are left behind to suffer sore privations.

It makes my whiskers burn
With indignation, when I learn
How many a petted tortoiseshell and tabby
To starvation point comes down,
When the family's out of town.
(There's a sample of Home Rule for Mr. L-bby!)

Once, in Egypt whosoe'er
Killed a cat (excepting Care)
Got his instant *coup de grâce* (see Diodorus);

We were then a nation's pride,
And, when any of us died,
The Pharaoh and the fellah wept in chorus.

O the life that there was ours,
O the basking in the bowers,
And the dreams of future dignity as mummies!
O those days of long repose
Mid the lotus and the rose,
And the dainties that regaled our little—appetites!

O those nights upon the tiles,
O the dalliance and the wiles,
And the serenades that shook the Libyan welkin,
As, conscious of his place
In a consecrated race,
Loud and louder rose the voice of great Grimalkin!

Then to think in London dens
(*Horresco referens*)
The heirs of such prestige should be neglected,
And pine through lapse of "laps"
Of that beverage, perhaps,
Which has always as our birthright been respected.

'Tis hard to bid adieu
To the honour we once knew
On the banks of Cleopatra's noble river,
And on weather-beaten leg,
Oft a casual meal to beg
From the basket of the man-o'-lights-and-liver.

So, good people, don't forget,
When you take us for a pet,
To that pleasure are attached some obligations;
And your duty 'tis to see,
Ere you "take your hook" and flee,
That our larder is supplied with proper rations.

LA MORGUE DE LA MER

(AT A FISHMONGER'S)

OFT I stand in contemplation
Of that punctual oblation
For our need's accommodation
The unwearied waters give;
Pondering o'er Nature's notion,
How, unconscious of devotion,
Children of the teeming ocean,
Ye must die, so we may live!

On this *morgue* of marble lying,
Some for boiling, some for frying,
For our hunger's satisfying,
While our appetite ye whet,
Comes no comrade nigh to name you,
No fond relative to claim you;
Dark oblivion overcame you
In that overhauling net.

Balanced now is each one's billet,
Soles in sacrificial fillet,
An the master-monger will it,
Eels as equals here must greet;
Cod in slices disuniting,
Plaice (men) for position fighting
With the well-intentioned whiting,
Trying to make both ends meet.

Shall the unoffending oyster,
Torn from its crustacean cloister,
(Made by briny tears yet moister)
Feel the cruel cruet's sting;
Crabs, for once, shall get a dressing,
Haddocks earn a smoky blessing,
Mackerel, their fears confessing,
To the friendly fennel cling.

Sturgeon, offered Royal quarters,
When annexed in British waters,
Know, your unborn sons and daughters
Are to caviar debased!

Slights are all around allotted—
Shrimps, like billiard balls, are potted,
Sardines in a tin are clotted,
Genuine bloaters turned to paste.

Lobsters all are colour changing
At such odious disarranging,
(Claw from claw they'll be estranging,
At the mayonnaise's call).
Well-a-day, my John o' Dory,
Hero of the sacred story,
Come to this your ancient glory?
What a piscatorial fall!

Ye might give such information
Of the finny federation—
What is quite a dolphin's station,
By real ground swells what is worn?
Does your Press o'er sea-snakes quarrel?
Will a whitebait suck a coral?
Can the mermaids point a moral
With the tail that they adorn?

O for just the least suggestion
Touching the aquatic question!
But, alas! 'tis our digestion,
Not diversion, ye befriend.
And the fog on all is falling,
And I hear the "winners" calling,
See the 'buses westward crawling—
So my way I homeward wend.

BALLADE OF THE SURPLUS SPINSTERS

[*The last Census shows that there are six hundred thousand more females than males in the population of the United Kingdom.*]

They gather together, a virginal band,
At the beautiful gates of that garden fair
By Cupid planted, by Hymen planned,
(O the orange-blossom is fragrant there!)
And they gaze on the Eden they may not share,
Where men are fettered, but women are free,
While each one murmurs a wistful prayer—
"O lover, come wooing, a-wooing of me!"

"How long shall the opposite sex withstand
The charms our mirrors each day declare?
The waist that yearns to be lovingly spanned,
The eloquent eyes, the halo of hair,
The finished complexion of colour rare,
The lips that ripple with repartee—
Are all things fruitless a spouse to snare?
O lover, come wooing, a-wooing of me!"

"Nay, is it our fault that the *belles* in the land
Outnumber the *beaux;* that we all cannot pair;
That of mates the supply far exceeds the demand,
As we're slowly, but surely, becoming aware?
Shall we give up the race for the ring? *Au contraire*,
The sirens were not so unwearied as we,
And the voice of the spinster still calls through the air,
"O lover, come wooing, a-wooing of me!"

Father Noah, had you never a female to spare
In your quite irreproachable *pot-pourri?*
No superfluous puss your repose to impair
With—"O lover, come wooing, a-wooing of me"?

TO DRYASDUST, LEFT IN TOWN

(RONDEAU REDOUBLÉ)

TRUCE to your tomes, and your ungracious grind,
Come to me in my garden by the sea;
Quick, from your brow the braids of toil unbind,
Then on your folios leave your P.P.C.

I'll hear no protest, brook no pedant's plea,
To no sophistical excuse be blind;
Your *cinquantaine* demands its jubilee:
Truce to your tomes, and your ungracious grind.

Across my lawn flutters the southern wind,
Wooing to noons of blissful lethargy;
Within your heart some echo sure 'twill find:
Come to me in my garden by the sea.

There, 'neath the fragrance of my cedar tree,
Upon the speckled sward at length reclined,
You'll take your *otium-cum*-dignity:
Quick, from your brow the braids of toil unbind.

Summer will soon be silent. 'Twere unkind
To turn deaf ear to her sweet symphony,
Where all the yearnings of the year are shrined—
Then on your folios leave your P.P.C.

And, *en revanche*, I'll pledge my cellar key
To give you *quid pro quo*. Have you no mind,
Across a "magnum" with a pedigree,
To gossip of the days we've left behind?
Truce to your tomes!

"MADE ABSOLUTE"—AND AFTERWARDS

(FROM THE WOMAN'S POINT OF VIEW)

"*Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love.*"—The Song of Solomon.

YES, I am free in the law's grim gaze
To do what I will with my rest of life,
Free—as I was in those maiden days,
Ere the priest pronounced me wife.

Yet now I have gained my great desire,
And severed myself from the yoke of the one,
Will the other atone for the gauntlet of fire
That I am, forsooth, to run?

Men are so matched when they come to mate,
Selfishness differs so little in each—
But that is a lesson that just too late
Does life to a woman teach.

There flutters across her marriage path
A laughing lip, an importunate eye,
A flattering tongue that no honour hath—
How easily scruples die!

Too narrow becomes her appointed place,
Insidious hint—she is *incomprise*,
The devil's advocate wins his case
With a thousand plausible pleas.

Her soul is parched with a peevish drouth,
In the garb of the god she veils the brute;
And vanity draws, at the last, her mouth
Towards the forbidden fruit.

Then in the stark unmerciful dawn,
That ever follows dishonour's dusk,
The fulness and flavour are all withdrawn,
She holds to her heart a husk.

So, though of the one my soul was sick,
Till I called to his lawful lips a truce,
Will not the other's punish and prick
When their polish dulls by use?

And afterwards—I my way must trend
  Down the slippery slopes of avenging years,
Held aloof from hands that pretend
  To be purer than their peers.

Why did I compass this evil thing,
  Leap in my frenzy beyond the pale?
Love was it, such as the poets sing?—
  O theirs is a treacherous tale.

Love?—the word hurts me. Not all those days
  Of delight, the crown of desires suit,
Given and giving, are worth in their praise
  One hour of sweet repute.

One hour to wander, unchallenged, at will
  With the best behaved in the social shoal;
Privilege scant? It will kindle or kill
  The light in a woman's soul.

And now there will always be something to hide,
  To cover some uncommendable chink;
If we only could fathom the other side
  When our feet are on the brink!

God, they say, from His mercy-seat,
The sin through its suffering may forgive;
Yet not His the shrift I would now entreat,
But the world's in which I live.

SOUVENIRS DE VOYAGE

(A LYRIC OF LABELS)

AND am I really back in Town,
To fret beneath its yellow frown
Through all the foggy "fall"?
So let me then review, ere I
Put my impedimenta by,
These *étiquettes*, the while I try
My wanderings to recall.

With *this* my willing fancy speeds
Beyond the mist, o'er pleasant meads,
Where Summer hangs her signs.
Before me rise the hills of Aix,
The baths that duty daily takes,
The banks that pleasure nightly makes,
The punters and the pines.

And this evokes a full moon-tide,
What time the Adriatic's bride
Received my weary frame.

When through my sleep, the night along,
I heard the mad mosquito-song,
And woke to find my face gone wrong,
A sorrow and a shame.

Then one clear dawn smiles back to me
Across the blue Ionian sea,
Of many a legend known;
Where, yet untrod by tripper churl,
Unstirred by stress of modern whirl,
Corfù lay gleaming, like a pearl
Set in a sapphire zone.

"Athens." And once again I climb
That classic crest, where cruel Time
Has dealt disaster drear.
The air is laden with lament—
"Our gods are dead, their shrines are rent,
O love, O labour, vainly spent,
Your birthplace is your bier!"

I touch this Eastern type, and lo,
Stamboul, its old seraglio,
Its mosques I now behold.

Its minarets to Heav'n that rise,
Its dogs o'er earth that tyrannise,
Its mysteries of flashing eyes
Across the yashmak's fold.

Down the sweet Bosphorus I glide,
Quaint villages on either side—
Enough, my dream is done.
But in the wintry by-and-by,
When others vaunt their southern sky,
My little soul shall softly sigh,
"I too have seen the sun."

OUR SOCIETY CLEARANCE SALE

Though most of the world is at brae, bath, or beach,
To such of our *clientèle* still within reach
We beg leave to say,
We can offer to-day
Some curious commodities *au grand rabais!*

Nobility, gentry, just please to remark
Our charming consignment from Battersea Park,
Choose the "form" which you like,
(We throw in the "bike")
And you'll find us most ready a bargain to strike.

We've sweet samples of *débutantes* quite up to date,
Who somehow this year didn't manage to mate,
For Jonathan's daughters,
From over the waters,
Carried off the big prizes (as say the reporters).

Note our bundles of wall-flowers selling off cheap,
Looking weedy, poor dears, through the hours they keep,
Which with girls to disperse,
And no cash to disburse,
Are conditions to freshness of colour adverse.

There are several lengths of nice button-holed boys
We label "our special society toys";
They have not much *esprit*,
But a pure pedigree,
And are quite *sans pareil* at a five-o'clock tea.

We have one or two choice reputations still left,
Untarnished, and perfect in warp and in weft,
But if these you would own,
Pray, a call don't postpone,
For they often become in one evening fly-blown.

To those, who to country bazaars condescend,
Our "Titled-Comedian-Troupe" we commend,
We've (mid many a pearl)
A *jeune premier* Earl,
And a very arch duchess, a skirt-dancing girl.

In our showrooms you'll find an extensive variety
Of people who fail to "arrive" in society,
Well backed as beginners,
They don't become winners,
Nor get the "right" set to their dances and dinners.

What with all this big Unionist boom in the land,
We've got Radical remnants galore now on hand,
Which the public won't buy,
As they wink t'other eye,
With—"No more of that poor filibustering fry!"

THE END

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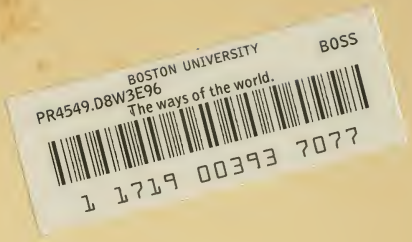

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